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## C. Glossary

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**Affordable housing** generally refers to housing occupied by persons or households with an income of less than 80% of metropolitan area median income, and for which the household pays no more than 30% of its income. In Cambridge, because of the high cost of housing, some sort of subsidy is usually required to create or preserve affordable housing.

**Arterial streets** provide for through traffic and connect principal areas of activity within the city while also providing for direct access to abutting land. The arterial system should help to define residential neighborhoods and commercial areas.

**Commercial districts** are parts of the city with a predominance of commercial activity, including retail uses such as shops, cafes, restaurants, and business uses, which are also generally referred to as offices.

Two **Conservation Districts** in the Harvard Square and Mid-Cambridge neighborhoods have been established by the City Council and are administered by committees of residents working with the Cambridge Historical Commission. These districts provide for very strict review of architectural changes and include some discretion in the amount of development allowed.

The **Demolition Ordinance**, adopted by the City Council and administered by the Cambridge Historical Commission, requires that the Commission review the demolition of any structure 50 years or older; if the building is found to be preferably preserved, the Commission may delay issuance of the Building Permit for 6 months, while an alternative to demolition is sought. If none is found, the structure may then be demolished.

**Density of development** refers to the degree of concentration of square footage of a building on its site. Floor area ratio (FAR) measures density by comparing the square footage of a building to its site: at .5 FAR the building area is half that of the site, at 1 FAR, these are equal, at 2 FAR the building area is twice that of the site, etc.

**Design review** is the process of studying an architect's proposal for a building to see if improvements can be made, on the basis of some defined criteria. In Cambridge, design review provisions are rather complex and vary from area to area. The basis for review may be set in the Zoning Ordinance, in guidelines supplementing the Ordinance, or in special ordinances adopted by the City Council (e.g. the Mid-Cambridge Neighborhood Conservation District).

**Dimensional bonuses** are provisions of the Zoning Ordinance which allow more lenient building heights or setbacks from property lines in exchange for some defined public benefit, such as adherence to a design plan or preservation of historic buildings.

**Downzoning** refers to a change in zoning which diminishes the amount of development allowed by the Zoning Ordinance.

**Industrial districts** are those parts of Cambridge which have been centers for traditional industrial uses, such as Alewife and parts of East Cambridge and Cambridgeport.

**Infrastructure** refers to the roadways and utilities (including water, sewer, electric, gas, and telephone) serving the city.

**Institutional uses** are nonprofit public and private entities such as libraries, churches, post offices, schools, colleges, and universities.

**Institutional Overlay Districts** have been defined in the Zoning Ordinance; their purpose is to prevent the growth of institutions in the lower density residential districts of Cambridge.

**Linkage**, like taxation, is based on the concept that development should bear some of the costs of its impact on the community. In Cambridge, there is a \$2 per square foot linkage payment required for commercial developments which require a Special Permit; the first 30,000 square feet is not subject to linkage.

**Market forces** refers to economic factors of supply and demand which, among other effects, may make a particular type of development more or less profitable and thus more or less likely to happen than another type.

**MetroPlan 2000** is a document produced by the Metropolitan Area Planning Council with the intent of creating a vision for future growth in the 101 cities and towns in the Boston region.

**Mixed-use** refers to a building or area in which several uses coexist, such as Charles Square, with its office, retail, hotel, and residences, or Mass. Ave., with its mix of residential, office, and retail uses.

**Neighborhood character** is an imprecise term which attempts to summarize the variety of physical attributes that make a neighborhood "feel" a certain way. Character is certainly influenced by the predominant architectural styles, by types of buildings (e.g. triple deckers or brick apartment buildings), by dimensional aspects such as street widths and building heights and setbacks, and by landscaping of yards and streets.

**Neighborhood study processes** have been undertaken by the Community Development Department in several neighborhoods (East Cambridge, North Cambridge, Riverside, Area 4, and Wellington-Harrington) and will eventually cover the entire city. The purpose of these studies is to clarify each neighborhood's image and to establish a program for its future evolution.

**North Point** is the northeasternmost portion of Cambridge, separated from East Cambridge by the Msgr. O'Brien Highway. The controversial ramps for the Central Artery will be located partially in North Point, partially in Charlestown.

**Open space** loosely refers to unbuilt parts of the city. Most often, it is meant to refer only to public parks, playgrounds, and spaces like the Fresh Pond reservation and the Charles River and its banks; at other times, the term may include private spaces, like Harvard Yard, the Lotus Headquarters courtyard in East Cambridge, and Jerry's Pond in Alewife.

**Planned Unit Development** is a designation in the Zoning Ordinance. This is typically a district which allows development exceeding that permitted in the "base district." In order to qualify for the additional square footage or height of development, specified public benefits are required, such as adherence to an approved master plan or provision of open space.

**Research and development** refers to business enterprises doing just what the name implies; although this is not an official zoning term, "r & d" firms are most commonly located in office or industrial areas.

**Retail uses** in Cambridge are allowed in many districts, including business, industrial, and some Planned Unit Development areas. Most residential and office districts do not allow new retail use, although there are many stores or cafés which are "grandfathered" since they were in existence before the zoning was established.

The **Riverfront** is a term often used in reference to the East Cambridge Riverfront, from the Longfellow Bridge to the Museum of Science.

**Scheme Z** was the name given to the State's original plan for the massive Central Artery interchange and associated Charles River crossing. The City has sued the State to require that a satisfactory redesign be implemented, and negotiations are still underway to that end.

**Section 8 Rental Assistance** is a federal program of rental payments to private landlords on behalf of lower income tenants. Under this program, the tenant pays 30% of household income to the landlord, and the remainder of the rent is paid from the federal funds. In Cambridge, the program is administered by the Cambridge Housing Authority, which sets the rent for the unit, with maximum rents established by HUD as the local area fair market rents.

**SHARP** is a state rental assistance program operated through the Massachusetts Housing Finance Agency (MHFA) to provide rental subsidies to housing projects with MHFA below-market-rate financing to fill the gap between what low and moderate income tenants could afford to pay as rent and the income needed to pay the financing costs and other operating expenses. The SHARP program is no longer available for new projects.

**Special Permits** are given by the Board of Zoning Appeal or the planning Board when it is determined that a particular project is reasonable at the location where it is being proposed. A special permit will normally be granted unless the proposal fails to meet the special permit criteria established in the Zoning Ordinance. The Boards have the power to attach conditions as necessary.

The **State Implementation Plan** is the program by which the Commonwealth of Massachusetts will comply with the goals contained in the Transportation Control Plan for the Metropolitan Boston Interstate Air Quality Control Region as promulgated by the United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and mandated by the Federal Clean Air Act as amended in 1990.

The **Townhouse Ordinance** was conceived in the late 1970s as a way to allow some flexibility in housing design and density in certain districts while, at the same time, avoiding the "Arlington Pillbox" type of apartment building, which could be built as-of-right with negative impacts on neighborhood character. Unfortunately, the number of townhouse/ condominium projects that were built was unexpectedly large, filling in too many back yards. Thus, in the late 1980s the ordinance was revised to eliminate most of the bonus provision.

**Traffic Mitigation** can include strategies and formulas that the city can support and/or require to reduce the number of single-occupant vehicles. This menu can include computerized ride-sharing, incentives to carpool and vanpool, and encouragement of transit use as well as bicycling and walking.

The **Transportation Management Program** refers to the City's effort to encourage alternatives to the automobile carrying only its driver- incentives and requirements have been developed in Cambridge for carpooling, vanpooling, and the use of mass transit, including buses, the subway, and commuter rail. In addition, bicycle usage is being actively encouraged.

**Urban Design** is an evolving discipline which relates to planning and to architecture. Its focus is on physical design, bringing together aspects of building design with the design of outdoor spaces, both public and private. In Cambridge, urban design plans and guidelines have been created to supplement the Zoning Ordinance in guiding the growth of several parts of the city, such as the East Cambridge Riverfront and Harvard Square.

A **Variance** is a legal relief valve by which a property owner may obtain an exemption from the requirements of the Zoning Ordinance. The petitioner must establish that a hardship exists particular to the lot in question, and the Board must find that granting the variance will not harm the public good.